DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 226 897 RC 013 872

AUTHOR Cintron de Esteves, Carmen; Spicola, Rose F.
TITLE Four Hispanic Groups: Oral and Social Traditions, Education and Play Implications for Educators.
PUB DATE Apr 82
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (Chicago, IL, April 26-30, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Childhood Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; Cubans; *Cultural Context; *Educational Attitudes; Family Life; *Hispanic Americans; Mexican Americans; Parent Attitudes; *Play; Puerto Ricans; School Role; *Social Environment; *Television Viewing; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Oral Tradition; Teacher Awareness; Venezuelans

ABSTRACT

To determine if there are common factors which all teachers of Hispanic children should be acquainted with in order to facilitate the education of Hispanics, a study was conducted of 4 Hispanic groups (25 Mexican Americans, 23 Puerto Ricans, 20 Cubans, and 17 Venezuelans). Eighty-five families, together with their children ranging in age from 4-60 months, and extended families were interviewed in both English and Spanish. The four groups revealed intriguing similarities and differences with regard to oral and social traditions, education, play, and television. Oral traditions were alive among Hispanics and it is only through use that continuity will be preserved. Among all the groups, Hispanic traditions brought by the "conquistadores" and taught by the Catholic Church have been maintained. For all groups the family was their first priority in life. Education was highly encouraged in all groups. Most of the Hispanic children liked to play outside in activities that required energy and movement. There was heavy use of television. Schools need to offer more challenging and appropriate programs for Hispanic children, perhaps including more Hispanic culture. Teachers can help establish better communication with children through play, games, and songs. Educators should be aware of parents' expectations. (BRR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED226897

FOUR HISPANIC GROUPS: ORAL AND SOCIAL TRADITIONS, EDUCATION AND PLAY IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

By

Carmen Cintron de Esteve
University of Puerto Rico

Rosa F. Spicola
Texas Woman's University

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (Chicago, IL, April 26-30, 1982).

RC 013872

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rosa F. Spicola
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FOUR HISPANIC GROUPS: ORAL AND SOCIAL TRADITIONS, EDUCATION AND PLAY IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

AUG 1982
RECEIVED
ERIC/CRESS

Carmen Cintron de Esteves
University of Puerto Rico
Rose F. Spicola
Texas Woman's University

Are the culture and traditions of Hispanic groups more similar or different? Are there common factors which all teachers of Hispanic children should be acquainted with in order to facilitate the education of Hispanic groups?

It was to this basic question that a study was conducted of four Hispanic groups, Mexican-American, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Venezuelans. Eighty-five families, together with their children, ranging in age from 4-60 months, and extended family were interviewed in both English and Spanish.

The study focused on factors which were related to what parents did for and with their children and also what cultural traits and traditions they remembered from their own childhood.

Several questions directed the focus of the interviews:

(1) What type of language activities are developed in the homes of the Hispanic families related to their cultural heritage?

(2) What do parents seem to do differently from one ethnic group to another?

(3) Are school activities stressed such as reading, writing, and drawing?

(4) Is the acquisition of the second language encouraged or discouraged?

(5) What type of games do they play?

(6) What seems to affect cultural traditions?

The make-up of the interviews was: 25 Mexican-Americans, 23 Puerto Ricans, 20 Cubans and 17 Venezuelans. The Mexican-American group had lived longer in the United States than the other three groups. There was a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds and occupational status.

Hispanics represent 12 million of the population of the United States. There are 19 million if illegal aliens are counted of which Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans constitute 80%. Within the United States there are millions of children who speak only limited English. Bilingualism, biculturalism, multi-lingualism is a reality in the United States.

The four groups analyzed in the study have features of a common cultural heritage: Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela share a substantial Hispanic heritage. Certain features of this heritage are commonly adduced as evidence of its vitality and importance; the Spanish language, a double standard and male dominance in the family, ritual kinship, the town plaza, Catholicism, cockfighting, and Spanish styles in music, literature, art and architecture. These components of the Hispanic heritage, however, are of different order, and not all of them are equally represented among the different groups. One never actually "sees" a culture, one cannot see its history nor its future. Yet what has already happened and what people hope, or expect will happen, are both essential to the present culture and to education.

The four Hispanic groups, each with interesting historic backgrounds, revealed intriguing similarities and differences with regard to oral and social traditions, education, play and television.

Oral traditions

The perhaps unconscious desire to transmit the culture starts early in the life of the Hispanic children, when their mothers sing lullabies and initiate their children into infant games. Hispanic mothers enjoyed singing to their children traditional songs and lullabies they remembered from their own childhood.

An important part of oral tradition is that it is largely learned in a personal and unique situation almost always by word of mouth. The melody and rhyme of the language patterns used by the Hispanic mothers to sing lullabies like "Duermete nene, duerme y no llores"....or "a dormir a dormir"... or to teach infant games like, "Tortitas, Tortitas".. and "La linda manita"... enter into a personal interaction between language itself and the children.

Hispanic parents demonstrate to their children their love and the love of their culture by sharing it in an informal manner. Oral traditions are alive among Hispanics and it is only through use that its continuity will be preserved.

Social traditions

Among all the groups, Hispanic traditions brought by the "conquistadores" (conquerors) and taught by the Catholic church have been maintained. It is rather amazing how all the groups with all the changes that have occured in their lives cling to their Hispanic roots and in addition attempt to pass them down to their children.

For all groups in the study, the family was their first priority in life. In social engagements, the family got together in a variety of activities such as going to the movies, going shopping,

visiting relatives, going to the park, to the church, or camping.

There were subtle differences among each group. More Puerto Ricans traveled to visit their homeland than any other group.

It was found that Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Venezuelans had a better balance in the housework among the family members on a consistent basis. Mexican mothers tended to carry all the housework and only .9% had the household work distributed among family members.

Discipline was divided more or less equally among parents. Mothers tended to delegate the discipline to the fathers when they got home. All of the families agreed that spanking was not the best way to control the behavior of the children. They preferred to praise the child when doing something good with small rewards like an ice cream, time for T.V., a candy or by giving permission to go outside.

Among the social celebrations common to all families involved in the study was Christmas. This is a religious celebration that came to the Hispanics through the Spaniards. Santa Claus is not a part of the Hispanic Christmas traditions, but 75% of the parents used Santa as the person who "brings" the gift to the children. One-fourth of the families used the traditional Baby Jesus in their celebration.

There is another celebration directly related with Christmas. El día de los Reyes Magos. This is a celebration in which the children are given gifts in commemoration of the gifts that the Three Wise Men offered Baby Jesus. Among the four groups, the Venezuelans and the Puerto Ricans celebrate it more, Mexicans celebrate it the least.

There are other traditions which throughout the years have been modified toward social activities rather than religious ones: Baptism, First Communion, Fifteenth Birthday and the "Compadrazgo" are among these traditions.

There are other traditions common to all the groups, these are the feast celebrations. Every town or city has a "patron" or a saint to protect the city. Every year each town celebrates its saint day with parades, feasts, queens, and other festivities.

There are other trolitris like "Posadas" for Mexico, "Misas de Aguinadlo" (Carroll mass) for Puerto Rico. Vipe of the dead, Posarios "The Holy Week" is a sacred celebration among all the groups. During the whole week in their homelands the activities are kept in a low key. On Holy Thursday and Holy Friday all businesses are closed. Families visit the churches and little girls are dressed in white. Easter Sunday is celebrated, but bunnies are not used as in the United States.

It was found that the traditional blessing ("la bendicion") one of the oldest Spanish traditions, is most likely to be preserved by the Venezuelans and the Puerto Ricans than among the Cubans and among the Mexicans. This custom requires the children to "ask" their parents and relatives the blessing when arriving and before leaving the house, usually accompanied by a kiss.

It seems that the Mexicans are the group that have been changing the most. They seem to be not doing as much as the other groups to maintain the social traditions examined in this study. It is also true that Mexicans comprise the group that has been living the longest in the United States.

Education

Education was highly encouraged among all groups. A college education and higher professional careers were highly valued. All parents believed that education is the best heritage that they can offer to their children.

Children in this study had been taken care of mostly by their mothers. However, Hispanic mothers seem to be sending their children to school, even if they were not working, at ages 3 or 4, because the parents felt this early schooling is a good preparation for elementary school.

Venezuelans and Puerto Rican mothers believed that nursery school is a good preparation for school. Cuban and Mexican mothers believed this the least.

Parents, mostly mothers, but fathers as well, devoted time for teaching their children the colors, numbers, songs, poems, and games. Availability of materials in English and Spanish ranged from moderate to very good. Children had books to read. In most of the families, parents read to their children every day.

Parents appreciated the value of early learning, but their opinions were split when the question of learning to read arose. Parent's attitudes toward the language used to teach the child to read was mixed, with half believing Spanish should be first, and half believing English should be first.

Play

According to this study most of the Hispanic children like to play outside: they like running, riding their tricycles, playing with balls, cars and other toys.

A very interesting statistic was found. Eighty-eight percent

of the children do not like to play with tools or to engage in quiet games. They preferred to engage in activities that require more energy and movement.

Children usually played with children of their same sex. Fathers allowed their boys to play with girls but mothers allowed their boys to play with girls more than fathers did.

How about toys? Children among all groups preferred traditional toys, like dolls for girls and trucks for boys. Parents tended to buy educational toys for their children including books, crayons, magic markers and coloring books. (Parents allowed their girls to play with trucks and guns but they would not allow their boys to play with girls' dolls.)

Television

It was found there was a heavy use of television, more than 25 hours per week, for recreational and educational purposes. Sesame Street, 1-2-3 Contact, cartoons and Wonder Woman were among the children's favorite programs.

Hispanic groups in this study also used television for educational purposes, and they used it with their children. Cubans were the group that used television as an educational medium to increase their English vocabulary and their auditory skills.

Parents recommended educational programs to their children like documentaries, children's specials, Disney's Wonderful World and Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. Most of the parents were aware of the educational value of television, if used properly.

Defining culture is not an easy task, there are hundreds of different definitions, but this study seems to show that

Hispanic parents do share some common cultural traditions and that they are very conscious of their rich Hispanic heritage. These four Hispanic groups are also attempting to pass this heritage on to their children.

There are also some definite differences in these four Hispanic groups which should alert educators to the fact that they cannot be treated as if they are all alike in their beliefs.

Implications for Education

Hispanic parents aspire to higher professions for their children, since they do not want occupational jobs for their children. Schools need to offer more challenging and appropriate programs for Hispanic children.

Schools may consider modification of their programs to include more of the culture of the Hispanic children. Educational programs should generate a positive attitude among the children and take into consideration their cultural background.

Hispanic children like to engage in energetic activities not quiet games or games that require tools. Teachers need to realize this and take it into consideration when developing activities for Hispanic children. Activities should be developed to help children feel adequate and yet at the same time teach the Hispanic children how to enjoy other types of activities.

Hispanic children like to be read to, to be talked to, to sing and to laugh loudly, and they like to be hugged. Teachers can help to establish better communication with children through play, games, and songs. This communication can probably be established rather easily and cooperatively with parents.

Educators should be aware of parents' expectations. About

half of the parents probably will want their children taught in English and about half will wish for a Spanish program. Bilingual education should be offered to parents who believe in it, otherwise there will be problems.

Hispanic children like to be read to, so teachers should provide opportunities to develop language and concepts about print through their own language and culture using parents as partners in the program.

REFERENCES

Baloyra, E., & Martz, J. Political attitudes in Venezuela. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979.

Brameld, T. The remaking of a culture. New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1959.

Carter, T., & Segura, R. Mexican-Americans in school: a decade of change. New York: College Entrance Examination Boards, 1979.

Crist, R., & Heahy, E. Venezuela. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969.

Erikson, E. Childhood and society. New York. Norton, 1964.

Lwing, R., Spicer, E., & Henderson, D. (Eds.). Six faces of Mexico. U.S.A.: University of Arizona, 1966

Kroeber, A., & Kluckhohn, C. The concept of culture. In R. Linton (Ed.) The Science of Man in the World of Crisis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.

Marrero, L. Atlas geografico y economico. Spain: Fournier, 1978.

Mesa-Lugo, C. Cuba in the 1970's. Albuquerque, Nuevo Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1978.

Meyer-Rogg, E. The assimilation of Cuban exiles. New York. Aberdeen Press, 1974.

Morris, V. C. The concept of culture: is transcultural education possible? In Cultural Issues in Education. Los Angeles, California: National Dissemination and Assessment Center, 1978.

Pai, Y. The concept of culture: is transcultural education possible? In Cultural Issues in Education. Los Angeles, California: National Dissemination and Assessment Center, 1978.

Russell, P. Mexico in transition. Austin, Texas: Colorado River Press, 1977.

Spair, E. Culture, language and personality. Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1949.

Schmidt, H. The roots of lo Mexicano. U.S.A.: Texas A & M University Press, 1978.

U.S. News and World Report, January, 17, 1977, 73.

Young R. Culture. In R. Abrahams & R. Troike (Eds.), Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972.